

# Having a Pelvic Exam and Pap Test



NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH  
National Cancer Institute

## Getting Ready for the Pelvic Exam

- ▶ A nurse will ask you about your health.
- ▶ You will go into the exam room. You will have a paper gown to put on and a sheet to cover you.
- ▶ You will lie down on the table with a sheet over your legs and stomach. You will let your knees fall to the side and put your feet in holders called stirrups.



## Here's Some Good Advice From Women Who Have Had This Exam:

*"If I start to feel embarrassed, I take some deep breaths and then I feel better."*

*"It feels funny to lie on the table with your knees up in the air, but you don't have to be there very long."*



*"The nurse told me not to have sex, use vaginal creams, or douche for 24 hours before the exam."*

*"She also told me not to have the Pap test when I am having my period."*

## Having the Exam

- ▶ The nurse or doctor will look at your vaginal area to see if you have any signs of infection or other problems.
- ▶ The nurse or doctor will slide a thin piece of plastic or metal that looks like a duck bill into your vagina to check inside.
- ▶ During the Pap test, the nurse or doctor will use a small brush to take a few cells from your cervix (the opening to the womb). A lab will check these cells for cancer or other problems. If cancer is found early, it is easier to cure.
- ▶ After the Pap test, the nurse or doctor will check your tubes, ovaries, and uterus (womb) by putting two gloved fingers inside your vagina. With her other hand, she will feel from the outside for any lumps or tenderness. This takes only a few minutes.



- ▶ The exam is over and you can get dressed.
- ▶ Be sure to ask any questions before the nurse or doctor leaves the room.

**Most Pap test results are normal.**

**The doctor or clinic will contact you if yours is not.**

**Call 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)  
for more information about the Pap test.**

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